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Kean University, "Kean Students Perform With Patti LuPon" (2021). *Evidence Inventory*. 453.
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Fall 2021 Semester

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Kean Students Perform With Patti LuPone

Oct 25, 2016



Just a few short weeks into the fall 2016 semester, 24 theatre and music majors from Kean University were given a Broadway-style experience of a lifetime. The students performed alongside two-time Grammy and Tony Award winner Patti LuPone in *Don't Monkey with Broadway* on September 17 at Kean's Enlow Recital Hall.

"Going to college is all about learning, so the real-life experiences we get while we are here are really important," said Connor McKenna, a sophomore theatre performance major from Hillsborough. "Learning from the best of the best is

awesome, especially when you're studying performing arts. Patti LuPone was inspiring, and it was incredible to get the chance to explore what we want to become with someone who is already there."

WATCH! Kean's 'Broadway Babies' Sing With Broadway Icon Patti LuPone

In preparation for the concert, the Kean University Broadway Babies, as the backup choir was called, worked tirelessly with Kean's Holly Logue, director of the Theatre Conservatory, and Joy Hermalyn, an adjunct professor of theatre who played LuPone's understudy in the show *War Paint* in Chicago this summer. The group's final rehearsal, held the afternoon of the show, was led by LuPone's musical director.

"Halfway through the rehearsal, the theatre doors opened and in walked Broadway megastar Patti LuPone," said Logue. "The students' reactions were priceless. There was a moment of sheer silence and utter excitement before everyone in the room broke out in applause."

For the next hour, the rehearsal became an intense master class for the students studying music and theater performance. LuPone gave the choir members advice on how to improve their singing and emphasized the importance of maintaining one's individuality as a character in a musical.

"It is a brutal business," LuPone told the aspiring performers. "One needs patience and discipline, and to be able to accept the sacrifices that the business demands."

That evening, the Kean University Broadway Babies and Patti LuPone ushered in Kean Stage's 2016-2017 season when they met again in front of a capacity audience in Enlow Hall. The backup choir accompanied her on several favorites from the Great White Way including *Trouble in River City* from *The Music Man*; *Sit Down You're Rockin' the Boat* from *Guys and Dolls*; *Blow Gabriel Blow* from *Anything Goes*; *Sleepy Man* from *The Robber Bridegroom* and *Some Other Time* from *On the Town*.

"Some of the greatest lessons are not found in books. It's important to learn how to connect with the audience and oneself on a professional level and being part of this concert definitely helped us learn more about how to go about doing just that," said Kevin DeCastro, a junior theatre major from Elizabeth. "Having had the chance to

learn directly from a legend in music and acting is both humbling and exciting. I see this experience as an incredible stepping stone to achieving my dreams of becoming an actor.”

Taking the stage with LuPone was the first of several learning opportunities that Kean Stage has planned for Kean University students. Students will get the chance to learn from experts in their chosen fields and to participate in professional-level programs. In the coming months, New Jersey native Christine Ebersole will offer a master class following her solo concert on November 12, and a new choir will be auditioned to perform backup for Judy Collins on December 18. Both concerts will be held at Enlow Recital Hall.

“Patti LuPone graciously gave of her time and expertise to give our students practical advice and a chance to showcase their talents on stage,” said Steve Cochran, manager of Kean Stage. “Her unique gifts have undoubtedly left an indelible mark on these aspiring actors and musicians and given them hope for what’s to come if they continue to reach for the stars.”

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